

18. *LANIUS CRISTATUS* LINN. IN KUTCH, GUJARAT - A WESTWARD EXTENSION

Lester in his 'The birds of Kutch' had mentioned the Brown Shrike as a cold weather visitor to Kutch. Salim Ali was of the opinion that it was not likely to be met with in this area. I have been seeing a shrike off and on in winter in my own compound here in Bhuj as also over the years in the plantation at Vijaya Vilas Palace (Mandvi). I think this bird fits in with the description of *Lanius cristatus* as regards its plumage and choice of habitat. Its behaviour too is different from the similar-coloured shrikes which are known to be met with in Kutch and its neighbourhood as either winter visitors or passage migrants. The bird in question keeps to bushes, fruit trees or hedgerows from which it launches sallies at its prey on the ground in typical shrike fashion; but does not perch on a tree or bush in an exposed position. Only collecting it or photographing it could help identify it.

As regards the distribution of *Lanius cristatus*, Ripley (SYNOPSIS) seems to follow the information of

Vaurie. In the HANDBOOK the distribution is given as '..... roughly south and east of a line from Ahmednagar through the Surat Dangs (Gujarat), Mhow (Madhya Pradesh), Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and Nepal'. On the other hand Stuart Baker (FAUNA II) says: 'In winter it is found practically throughout Northern India as far as south as Mt. Abu'. The last is not far, as the crow flies, from north Gujarat and Kutch. Thus it would be interesting if there are any latest reports of sightings or firm records of this shrike's occurrence in districts of north Gujarat or Saurashtra.

November 3, 1993

HIMMATSINHJI

Jubilee Ground,

Bhuj, Kutch,

Gujarat.

19. FOOD STORING BEHAVIOUR OF THE JUNGLE CROW *CORVUS MACRORHYNCHOS* WAGLER

On 12th July 1993, I was at the forest check-post Falasia in Udaipur district. At about 11 a.m., I saw a Jungle crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* alighting on the tiling of a house beside the check-post. It was holding a dead half-eaten House rat *Rattus rattus* in its bill. Just after alighting on the tile-roof, it quickly placed the dead rat inside a small space, present beneath one of the tiles. It pulled the tile slightly ahead, holding it in its bill to cover the exposed part of the dead rat. The crow worked the tile this way and that, even then it was unable to hide the rat completely. After this 'trial and error' it inserted the tail of the rat forcefully under the tile. After placing the carcass of the rat the

crow flew away to a neem tree.

Food-storing behaviour of the jungle crow has also been described by Natarajan (JBNHS 89: 375. 1992) at Pt. Calimere Sanctuary where he observed the crows hiding food material on ground and using the vegetation as cover.

November 3, 1993

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20. YELLOWTHROATED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS XANTHOLAEMUS* (JERDON) AT BILIGIRIRANGAN HILLS, KARNATAKA

Biligirirangan hills form a part of a discontinuous hill range running north to south, varying from 600-1800 m (above MSL). The hill

range is located between Chamrajnagar, Yellandur and Kollegal in Mysore district of Karnataka, South India.

Biligirirangan hill (12° 08' N, 77° 00' E, 1280 m

above MSL) with an ancient temple of Biligiri Rangaswamy at the summit, is a very famous pilgrimage centre. It forms the main tourist attraction of Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary covering an area of 539.52 sq. km.

As a part of the survey on the status and distribution of yellowthroated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* (Jerdon) Dr. S. Subramanya and J.N. Prasad visited the B.R. hill ranges between 22-25 December 1990. During the survey, likely habitats in the sanctuary were visited, but the species was neither sighted nor was it heard.

On a subsequent visit to the Sanctuary, on 16 August 1992, we were birdwatching in the forests below the sheer rock on which the temple is situated. We were watching a pair of Shahin Falcons *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* Sundevall circling overhead and then fly past the rock face, when suddenly, the characteristic calls of the *P. xantholaemus* were heard. We traced the call to be coming from the densely foliated *Ficus* which was growing amidst the crevices on the rocky escarpment below the temple. We waited with curiosity to have a look at the birds to confirm their occurrence, but to no avail. Our excitement was further dampened by the rain and we had to return without seeing the birds.

The next visit was on 6 October 1992. We were keen to see the bird and so concentrated our efforts on the area where we had heard *P. xantholaemus*. Our strategies yielded good dividends and as in the first visit to the area, we heard the birds. Within few minutes a pair of *P. xantholaemus* emerged out of the *Ficus*, when we had a good look at the birds and

confirmed their identity. From the *Ficus*, the birds flew up to the small bushy trees on the vertical rock face and were seen catching some insects. Later they flew across on to the other side of the hill and we lost sight of them. A flock of three Redvented Bulbuls *P. cafer* and Redwhiskered Bulbuls *P. jocosus* were seen foraging in the vicinity.

The habitat where *P. xantholaemus* was sighted had dense vegetation comprising of a few trees of *Citrus maxima* along with *Ricinis*, *Schefflera*, *Sterculia*, *Acacia coccinea*, and *Lantana* which formed the edge of an old plantation.

Our sighting of *P. xantholaemus* happens to be the first report of the species for this area. Although the entire B.R. hills range was surveyed by the late Salim Ali during his survey of erstwhile Mysore state (Ali 1942, *JBNHS* 43, 44), he did not come across the species. Even R.C. Morris (1894-1977) an avid sportsman-naturalist, who spent most of his active life in B.R. hills range (Honnamatti Estate), failed to come across the bird.

P. xantholaemus has seemingly a disjunct but a wider distribution than hitherto accepted.

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21. A NOTE ON BAYA, *PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS* NESTING ON KRISHNACHUDA (*DELONIX REGIA*) TREE

During my tours, during August 1990 while I was at Haflong (Assam, c. 25° N, 93° E), I came across a krishnachuda tree (*Delonix regia*) on which a large number of Indian baya were nesting. The tree was standing within the compound of a house. Moreover, there was a small Assam type building around the stem of the tree. The tree was on Garampani-Diyungbra road and about 7 km from Diyungbra.

I had never seen Indian Baya nesting on krishnachuda and that too within a compound of a house.

As I knew the nearest colony site of Baya on a betelnut grove about 20 km away on Diyungbra-Lanka road, I went there and found that the betelnut grove had been felled and cleared. A few Bayas had constructed nests on a lone betelnut palm. A few others on a phoenix palm. There were some nests on